



## External Evaluation Report

### Heritage High School

March 2008

Lead Evaluator: Helena McVeigh



*Heritage High School*



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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## Introduction

The aim of the Cayman Islands' Education Standards and Assessment Unit (ESAU) is to contribute to the continuous improvement of education in the Cayman Islands, through rigorous independent external evaluations and by providing high quality advice and research.

Each school receives an external evaluation approximately every four years. The evaluation identifies the school's strengths and the areas that need to be improved. In some cases, schools will be visited within four years in order to check on the progress that has been made in the areas identified as needing to improve. External evaluations are guided by the criteria in the ESAU *Handbook for the Evaluation of Educational Provision*.

External evaluations provide schools, parents and the community, the Department of Education Services and the Ministry of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports and Culture with an external and impartial evaluation of the quality of a school's work and its impact on students' learning and the standards they achieve. Through the publication of reports, external evaluations contribute to accountability, transparency and openness within the education system.

This was the first external evaluation for Heritage High School. It took place during the week beginning 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008 and involved a team of two evaluators. In addition, provision for special educational needs and for modern foreign languages was looked at a few weeks prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> March.

The following aspects of the school's work were looked at:

- Standards achieved and progress made by students
- The effectiveness of teaching and how well students learn
- The quality of students' personal development
- The quality of the curriculum
- How well the school is led and managed
- The quality of the support and guidance offered to students, the level of care for their welfare, and support for their attendance and punctuality

- The effectiveness of links with parents and the community
- How well the school is preparing students to become 'Educated Caymanians'
- How well teachers help students to learn and use their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across all of their school work

The evaluation team gathered evidence in the following ways:

- 29 lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed, across most subjects offered.
- School documents, including teachers' planning were looked at and samples of students' work was scrutinised.
- Evaluators observed a staff briefing, student council meeting, morning tutorials, breaks and lunch times and after-school activities.
- Evaluators spoke with students and took account of their views from the questionnaires.
- Discussions took place with teachers, other members of Heritage and cross-campus staff.
- Comments from parents at the meeting before the evaluation and from the questionnaires were taken into account.

The evaluators used the following grading scale to describe aspects of the school's work:

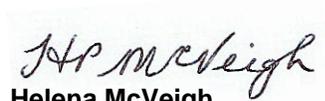
Grade		Description
1	<b>Very good</b>	Good in nearly all respects and exemplary in some significant areas
2	<b>Good</b>	Good in most respects. Weaknesses are minor and not in significant areas
3	<b>Adequate</b>	Satisfactory in most areas, no significant weaknesses, but no major strengths
4	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Some significant weaknesses (might be only one or two) that have negative impact on learning and standards

Evaluators also used the following criteria from the 'profile of the Educated Caymanian' to evaluate how effective the school is in helping students to develop these attributes:

The 'profile of the Educated Caymanian' states that an **Educated Caymanian** will:

- Be enthusiastic and motivated about learning, and will continue to extend his/her knowledge and skills after leaving school
- Be literate, numerate and adept at using information and communication technology
- Be a good communicator
- Be creative and appreciative of the arts
- Have a positive outlook and a high self-esteem
- Be well-rounded, good at finding solutions to problems, flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances and demands
- Have a strong work ethic and willingness to become an honest, reliable and responsible member of the work force
- Be respectful of God, him/herself, others, people from different backgrounds, the environment and property
- Be proud of and knowledgeable about the Caymanian culture, whilst respectful of other cultures and beliefs
- Be a good team player, civic-minded and willing to serve
- Have an awareness of global issues affecting aspects of life in the 21st century

The Education Standards and Assessment Unit hopes that this external evaluation will contribute in a positive way to helping Heritage High School become even more effective.



**Helena McVeigh**  
Director  
Education Standards and Assessment Unit

# Executive summary of the report

## Background

Heritage High School is one of four schools on the George Hicks Campus, which was divided up in September 2006. The decision to implement the 'schools within a school' model came after the school had outgrown its campus, exacerbated by the damage caused by Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. For two years after Ivan, students experienced part-time education and shifts in order to cater for the numbers on the campus.

Heritage High School has 263 students on roll, with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls. This is an increase of 14 students since September 2007. There are 14 students for whom English is a second language (ESL) and a further 93 who have special educational needs ranging from learning problems to physical and behavioural difficulties. The school also has a small but significant number of students with severe emotional and behavioural problems, some of whom have been sent to Heritage from other George Hicks campus schools.

The school's overall aim is 'to provide an environment conducive to the development of well rounded young citizens and to help them develop intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually so they are prepared to take up the challenges and opportunities presented to them in the highly technological 21<sup>st</sup> century'.

This was the first external evaluation for Heritage High School. It took place during the week beginning 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008 and involved a team of two evaluators. In addition, provision for special educational needs and for modern foreign languages was looked at a few weeks prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> March.

The findings of this evaluation must be viewed in the context of the relentless pace of change that Heritage staff and students have experienced over the past few years.

## How effective is the school overall?

Heritage High School has made great strides in a very short time. There have been many positive developments and improvements under the very focused and effective leadership of the school leader. The school provides an adequate education overall for its students, with some strengths. Staff are committed to the school and show a concern for the students in their care. There is a strong sense of teamwork in the school and the leadership has established a very supportive and caring ethos for staff and students. Students' welfare is given a high priority and a great deal of time is spent by the senior staff in dealing with students' personal issues.

There has been a strong focus on improving teaching and learning, which has had a positive impact, with the majority of lessons seen being at least adequate and often good. Teachers are beginning to use a wide range of strategies to engage and motivate students and they are all attempting to follow the school's framework for a good lesson. In general, however, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what

students can do and they do not give them enough responsibility in lessons and around the school.

Students enter the school with lower than expected skills in most subject areas and test data show that a high proportion have weak literacy skills. The school has made good use of the available data to target support for students with poor literacy skills, some of whom have made very good progress. There is a good focus on developing literacy through all subjects, which is making a difference.

Many students have poor social skills and there are a few that present very challenging behaviour. The school attempts to meet their needs, but with varying success.

The curriculum is broad and balanced with good provision in the arts, particularly in music. Many students participate in the band where a combination of discipline, dedication and success is having a positive impact on their self-esteem and personal development.

The school is helping students to develop some of the attributes of the Educated Caymanian (as defined in the 2005 National Consensus document), but there are areas that could be improved, particularly in relation to developing students' communication and interpersonal skills.

The school has demonstrated that it has the capacity to improve with continued support from the Campus Director and Learning Community Leader.

### What the school does well

- The leadership's strong and effective focus on improving teaching and learning
- The school is well led and managed, with a good sense of team work
- Staff show a high level of concern for students' welfare
- Support for raising levels of literacy is well targeted and having a positive impact
- Provision for music is very good and makes a strong contribution to students' personal development
- Communication with parents is good

### What needs to improve?

- The way that the school helps students to develop their social skills
- Teachers' expectations of what students' can achieve
- Opportunities for students to use their initiative, solve problems and apply their learning to new situations
- The way that teachers build on what students have learned in their primary schools

*The school is expected to modify its existing improvement plan or to prepare a supplementary action plan to address the areas for improvement identified above. The amended plan or supplement should be sent to the Department of Education Services and the Education Standards and Assessment Unit within 40 working days of receipt of the final report. The school is required to provide parents with an annual update on the progress that is being made in addressing the areas identified as needing to improve.*

## Information about the school and the evaluation team

### School contact information

Type of school:	Heritage High School
Age range of students:	11 – 15 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	259
School address:	George Hicks Campus PO Box 1809, Grand Cayman KY1-1109 Cayman Islands
Telephone number:	345- 516- 0461
Fax number:	345 -949- 9490
Name of school leader:	Steven Clark
Email address:	hhs@ghhs.edu.ky

### Information about the school

The school is one of four on the George Hicks Campus, which was divided up in September 2006. The schools are separated by chain link fences. Each serves around 250 students. The decision to implement the 'schools within a school' model came after the school had outgrown its campus, exacerbated by the damage caused by Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. For two years after Ivan, students experienced part-time education and shifts in order to cater for the numbers on the campus.

Since the split, a number of new staff have been recruited to support the schools and students, for example, two educational psychologists and a special educational needs coordinator work across the campus. There is a cross-campus Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) that supports students who have learning and behavioural difficulties. Each of the four schools has a leader and deputy leader, plus, since September 2007, a senior teacher to help with overall management. In addition, several management functions, including maintenance and the budget, are handled centrally by the campus director.

At Heritage High, there are 263 students on roll, with four tutor groups in each year. Fourteen students are learning English as an additional language - two of them receive individual support once per week and a third is supported alongside two students from Leading Edge High School.

There are 93 students on the special educational needs (SEN) register (35 per cent of the roll); 10 have individual education plans (IEPs) for a range of different needs from dyslexia to attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and physical disabilities. Six support staff and one assistant teacher provide in-class and withdrawal support for students with SEN. Some students also attend the cross-campus Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) for intensive support in literacy and numeracy.

There are 21 teachers assigned to Heritage High School, including the leader and deputy leader. Students are also taught by teachers who work in other George Hicks campus schools, who are known as 'shared staff', for subjects such as technology, physical education, life skills, drama and music.

### The evaluation team

Lead:	Helena McVeigh	Education Standards and Assessment Unit
Team:	Mary Bowerman Steve Crowley Sandra Tweddell	Education Standards and Assessment Unit Overseas evaluator (looking at special educational needs) Overseas evaluator (looking at Spanish)

## Commentary on evaluation findings

### How well do students achieve and make progress?

1. Students enter the school with a wide range of skills and aptitudes, but overall their attainment is well below what is expected. The levels of literacy and numeracy are often very low and many students have poorly developed social skills.
2. The school used the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) to assess students' reading skills in October 2007. The results show that in Year 9, 45 per cent of the students were below the basic level; in Year 8, 51% were below basic, but in Year 7, fewer than 26 per cent were below the basic level. In the school as a whole, too many students were below the standard expected (the 'proficient level')
3. The 2007 TerraNova results also indicate a wide range of achievement in reading. The girls outperformed the boys in all components - reading, vocabulary and composition - but their results were still poor, with below the expected grade level (over three-quarters of the boys were below grade level).
4. Work seen in lessons and students' books confirms the test data that standards of attainment are generally below what is expected for students' ages. An exception to this is in music where students' achievements are often good for their ages.
5. The school has focused on improving students' literacy skills and has targeted support for certain students, with the result that many of them have made very good progress.
6. The 2007 TerraNova results for mathematics showed that around 73 per cent of students in the current Year 8 and over 80 per cent in Year 9 performed below the expected grade level in the test. Results for girls and boys were very close. The school has been using a computer programme called FASTT Math to help improve students' mathematics skills and the results show that the majority of students made good progress in improving their fluency of multiplication facts.
7. A small number of students with severe emotional and/or behaviour problems show progress in some areas, but have difficulty coping in this mainstream setting.
8. There are 14 students for whom English is a second language, three of these receive specialist support and are making progress. The school attempts to support the others in class or in the TLC, but many have not yet had their stage of learning English assessed by the specialist teacher who has to work across all four schools as well as in other schools in Grand Cayman.

### What is the quality of students' personal development?

9. Overall, students' personal development is adequate, but more emphasis is needed on helping to improve their social skills.
10. Many students enter the school with poorly developed social skills. They do not always show respect for each other and often fail to listen when others are speaking to the whole class. Most students have some understanding of fairness and justice and they are vocal about what they see as their rights, but many fail to practise equality or fairness when it comes to their relationships with one another. There is too much low level squabbling in lessons. A few students are also quite aggressive towards each other during transitions between lessons, in stairwells and corridors, but most play or chat amicably during lunchtimes and breaks.
11. Some subjects such as music, art, drama and life skills help students to understand the importance of self-discipline and provide good opportunities to increase their self-esteem.
12. A recently formed student council gives students more of a voice within the school. This is having a positive impact, and there have been improvements to the bathrooms

and in the canteen because of students speaking out about their concerns. However, there are few opportunities for other students to take on responsibility.

13. The school provides opportunities for students to be involved in care and concern for the less fortunate in the community. For example, students have visited the Pines Retirement Home and have collected money for needy persons, such as an injured security guard, or causes such as the cancer society.
14. Students develop some understanding of moral and spiritual issues through life skills and religious education classes and, to lesser extent, during their tutorials. They are encouraged to investigate the fact that

people often react in certain ways because of their thoughts, feelings or beliefs.

15. The school has a behaviour policy, with rewards and sanctions. Some teachers make very good use of the 'way to go' awards, which are highly valued by their students, for example, as seen in one Year 7 tutor group. This behaviour policy is not yet monitored well enough to ensure that teachers use it consistently, or to determine whether it is having the desired effect.
16. Social studies lessons offer an introduction to and understanding of cultures of other countries and civilisations such as Egypt and Rome. Students also learn about other cultures as well as their own through their study of literature, art, drama and music.

### **How effective is the teaching and what impact does it have on students' learning?**

17. The quality of teaching is adequate overall. The teaching was better in Years 8 and 9 than in Year 7, where there were more unsatisfactory lessons. Sometimes, the quality of students' learning was undermined by the poor behaviour of a few students, despite the teachers' well-planned activities.
18. There were many good features of the lessons throughout the school, which reflects the leadership's strong focus from the outset on improving teaching and learning. Most teachers applied the principles of the school's 'good lesson' guidelines. They set learning objectives and generally shared these with students and referred to them during the lesson. In some cases the 'objectives' were merely a list of activities rather than specific outcomes for what students would be expected to know, understand and be able to do as a result of experiencing the lesson or group of lessons.
19. Most lessons started promptly, often with an immediate task for students to do. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, students were given ten quick questions to try as soon as they came into the room, which settled them down and provided a good opportunity to revisit previous learning.
20. Many teachers used a good variety of strategies that involve kinaesthetic (movement), visual and auditory learning. During the evaluation, a few teachers gave

students tasks that encouraged them to think and to work with others to solve problems. For example, in a Year 8 set 1 science class, students had to put words written on card into the correct order to represent chemical equations. In a Year 7 social studies lesson, the students threw a 'cushion globe' to one of their peers who had to answer a question about the topic they were studying. A language teacher used role-play effectively to engage Year 9 students in learning about household items in Spanish. Many teachers made good use of the data projectors and interactive whiteboards in their classrooms to create interest and visual focus.

21. Teachers generally have a good knowledge of the subjects they are teaching and are enthusiastic about their lessons. They have good relationships with the students in their classes and seem genuinely interested in their welfare. Most capture students' attention and respect, although there is often a small amount of low-level disruption that takes up teachers' time and detracts from the learning. In a few lessons, little learning took place because of constant interruptions to get students' attention. Teachers sometimes asked students to work with others in groups, but this was not always very effective as students did not relate well to each other and made no attempt to include everybody.

22. Most subjects are taught in ability sets, but there is still a range of attainment even within the sets. Some teachers manage to match the work effectively to students' different starting points and learning needs. For example, Year 7 students were given different worksheets in social studies that matched their reading and writing skill levels. Teachers also make good use of computer programmes that allow students to work at their own pace (for example, in mathematics). In the lessons seen, though, there was often a concentration on whole class work with students not having to think enough for themselves or to use their initiative to solve challenging problems. In general, teachers' expectations of students could be higher, with more challenge for the able students.
23. Some of the teaching in the lower sets was very good. Teachers often managed to motivate the students, who responded very positively. The teachers often listened well and gave adequate time for students to think before answering questions. A good example was a Year 7 set 4 science class, in which the teacher used a 'graphic organizer' very effectively to find out students' prior knowledge and good opportunities were provided for them to learn from one another. Students were encouraged to assess their own performance as team members. The teacher also made good use of metaphors to strengthen students' thinking and develop their imagination.
24. The support assistants work very effectively to help the students to whom they are assigned make as much progress as their peers.
25. Some of the teachers of the lower ability sets have developed very effective strategies for managing students' behaviour that could be shared more widely across the school.
26. In some subjects, such as music and art, teachers assess students' work effectively and using the information to set targets and plan the next steps. Students receive immediate and helpful constructive feedback in art lessons, which has a positive impact on their progress. They are also given very useful feedback in music and the Coconut Academy Award scheme is an excellent initiative that provides a clear focus for students and charts their progress.
27. The quality of teachers' marking of students' written work is too variable – sometimes it is thorough and regular with comments to help students improve- as seen in some English, science and mathematics work. In other cases, it is infrequent and skimpy. There is no whole-school approach for assessing students, which is a weakness.

### What is the quality of the curriculum?

28. The curriculum is broad and balanced with a good range of creative subjects, such as visual art, drama and music. Music is a strength and students benefit from opportunities to learn an instrument and participate in the band. Parents and students spoke very highly of their involvement in the band. Around 200 students from all year groups and sets from across the campus attend band practice regularly. The teacher's approach is one of high expectations, established routines and firm but friendly relationships to which the students respond extremely well. These sessions are very beneficial for students' personal development as well as their achievement in music.
29. Most aspects of the curriculum and how it is organised and timetabled fall outside of the control of the school, as they are designed at a whole-campus level to accommodate the shared staff and common teaching areas. There is scope to revisit the setting arrangements and some subjects have secured more flexibility by timetabling several classes together; for example, this enables music teachers to teach music lessons alongside instrumental instruction. There are only two life skills teachers for the whole campus, which results in students receiving only one lesson per week. Given that this is an area where students need more support, the school should find other ways to support students' personal development, for example, using the tutorial time in the mornings, which is not always used in the most constructive way by some teachers.

30. The school is attempting to meet the needs of its most able students who have been identified as gifted by providing some enrichment activities for them. It is commendable that some thought is being given to their particular needs, but more attention should be given to ensuring that they are challenged and stretched in their other lessons throughout the week. Also, some of the imaginative approaches that are provided for these gifted students would benefit others as well.
31. The school attempts to cater for less able students in the lower sets or through sessions in the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), and this is generally effective. However, students in these sets are not given the opportunity to study Spanish; the time is used instead for extra reading lessons.
32. The school is not building enough on work that students have done in the primary schools. In most subject areas, teachers are not fully aware of what students are taught before they enter Heritage, which partly accounts for why their expectations are often too low.
33. The curriculum is enriched by a range of after-school activities, particularly in sports and music, but there are also clubs for mathematics, Spanish, cooking, drama and dance. Parents were very enthusiastic at the meeting about the extra-curricular activities, especially the band. Students also have some access to careers education to help with their option choices.

### **How effective is the provision for students with special educational needs?**

34. Provision for students with special educational needs (SEN) has several good features, but there is room for improvement in areas, some of which are out of the school's control.
35. A high proportion of students have been identified as having special educational needs (35 per cent) and the range of needs is very wide, including learning, physical, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school leader is committed to ensuring that all students are well supported and the school has made considerable efforts to create a positive ethos in which they feel valued.
36. The school's provision for these students is enhanced by the work of the educational psychologist, the counsellors, the TLC staff and the special needs coordinator (SENCO), all of whom also work in other campus schools. However, the SENCO does not have time to coordinate provision in Heritage and much is left to the assistant teacher, who coordinates the work of the support staff and provides valuable individual support for students with long-standing learning needs and accompanying low self-image. The students work on individual programmes within a nurturing but structured learning environment. All are making good progress and some are making excellent progress. For example, one student advanced his reading age by 54 months over a period of seven months. The impact on this student's self-esteem has been considerable.
37. The school counsellors are valued by the students and the educational psychologist is actively and positively involved in the life of the school. Much has been achieved. The students recognize this and almost all who offered their views felt well supported. Students spoke very positively about their experiences in the TLC. They were able to articulate how and why they felt their visits were worthwhile. The school has access to a qualified occupational therapist, but her available time is limited and she has to provide physiotherapy for students, as the school does not have access to a qualified physiotherapist.
38. The school is making good use of data to identify students who need help and to target support for them. New initiatives and intervention plans are also being evaluated. For example, the school can show that some of the strategies introduced have resulted in students making good, and in some cases excellent, progress in improving aspects of their literacy skills.
39. The school continues to seek new ways in which to further nurture, guide and support the students. This is particularly important

at Heritage High as the school has a relatively high proportion of students with severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; some of these students have mental health problems. Although a small proportion of the total school population, the numbers are high compared to local and international comparisons. Currently, the

school does not meet the educational needs of these students. Gaining access to mental health services has proven to be, at best, slow. Some of these students, and those who work with them, are in need of the support and advice that only a clinical psychologist can offer.

## How well is the school led and managed?

40. The school is well led and managed and some aspects of leadership are very good. The school leader has a clear vision for the school and has established two appropriate and effective priorities: improving teaching and learning and building good relationships.
41. The leadership team work well together and share a common understanding of their aspirations for the school. The majority of staff feel valued and they all consider that they receive recognition for good work. There is a strong sense of teamwork and camaraderie amongst staff, including the administration, support staff and security guards, who make a valuable contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school.
42. Communication is good, with daily briefings for staff that help to establish the tone and common purpose. Several staff questioned – respectfully – whether there was still the need for such frequent meetings.
43. The focus on teaching and learning has been backed up by some useful professional development for staff, with an outline for what is expected in a good Heritage lesson. This is supported by frequent classroom observations by, mainly but not exclusively, the school leader, who provides helpful written feedback for teachers. A teacher has also been nominated as teacher-mentor, which is a very useful development, but needs to be formalised with a job description and a clearer brief to support teachers in the classroom. There is also no induction programme for newly qualified teachers, which is a gap.
44. The leadership is making effective use of test data to identify and support students with weak literacy skills. Other data is not, though, systematically recorded or analysed, for example for suspensions and attendance. Attainment data for students is also not yet in one place, so it is difficult to see how much progress students are making across all subjects, although delays in receipt of a management system are partly to blame for this.
45. The school runs well on a day-to-day basis and the leadership works hard to look after staff and students' welfare. A great deal of time is taken up, particularly by the deputy leader, with students' behavioural and other personal issues.
46. The leader has been creative in deploying staff in his school, within the constraints imposed by being part of a wider campus. He has drawn well on the skills and expertise of staff. For example, he has made excellent use of the assistant teacher to take a lead in organising SEN support, in the absence of a dedicated SENCO for the school. He is very hard working and committed to the school but parents suggested that he 'does too much himself', though they were extremely complimentary about his leadership.
47. The school improvement plan is well written, although the success criteria need to be sharpened. It was, though, mainly written by the leader. There are some appropriate plans to involve more staff the next time round and to review roles and responsibilities of the three members of the leadership team.

## How effective are other aspects of the school's work?

### The support and guidance offered to students and level of care for their welfare

48. The way that the school supports, guides and provides for students' welfare is satisfactory, with some significant strengths in relation to the care of individual students.
49. The school provides a caring environment for its students. The deputy school leader and the senior teacher are both responsible for pastoral matters, including students' health, safety and well-being. School leaders have made it a priority to foster good relationships between staff and students, and parents speak of the schools' 'nurturing' ethos. All staff maintain frequent communication with parents and caregivers.
50. Students are placed in tutor groups with a tutor who is responsible for monitoring their learning, effort, behaviour, attendance and punctuality. Tutors also ensure that students receive all school notices and they hold a short devotion each day. The tutor is the first point of contact for parents as well as students, which is a useful way of ensuring that at least one person tracks the progress of each student. Some tutors are more effective than others in the way they use the time allocated to them.
51. The school maintains good records of its students. These include reports from primary schools, as well as current reports, personal information such as health and medical records and notes concerning behavioural problems. Records of suspensions are computerized and are kept by the deputy school leader. Although there is a record of the name of the student suspended, the year group, the offence and the number of days, at present there is no further analysis of this data to enable the school to establish or investigate trends. The number of students suspended is high, and it is important that the school keeps under review whether this is always the best way to deal with discipline problems.
52. A number of students have mental health problems or serious emotional and behavioural disorders. The school makes every effort to provide appropriate support, for example, by referring students to their own on-site counsellors, the government psychiatric services or other support agencies such as the Department of Children and Family Services or the suspension unit at the Alternative Education Centre. Some of these students have problems that are too severe to be dealt with in a mainstream setting and much time is taken up by staff as they try to cope with such issues. The poor behaviour and weak poor social skills of students impede learning in too many lessons.
53. The school works hard to meet the academic and personal needs of each student, and there are several support staff who assist with this. An occupational therapist spends two hours a week at the school giving some support to students for whom this is a priority. However, her time is very limited as she also has responsibilities in other schools. Not all students for whom English is a second language get the specialist support they need as the teacher responsible for this also has responsibilities in other schools and has to prioritise her time to those whose need is greatest.
54. Students' attendance and punctuality are generally satisfactory, although there are a few persistent absentees. The school monitors attendance carefully and enlists outside help if contact with the home does not yield results.
55. The school's efforts to provide for the many and varied needs of its students is to be commended. However, time spent dealing with the relatively large number of students with severe behaviour problems, detracts from the focus on improving teaching and learning and raising standards of achievement.

## Links with parents and the community

56. Overall, the school's links with parents and the community are adequate, with some strengths.
57. Parents are very positive about the information they receive from the school. Newsletters and letters home keep parents up-to-date with school events as well as with their child's progress. They have an opportunity to meet with their child's tutor at the beginning of the academic year and with subject teachers at reporting sessions. All teachers maintain frequent communication with parents and caregivers, often using their cell phones, and parents are very appreciative of this. Parents indicate, however, that they would like to have more input and be more involved in major decisions; currently they feel they are informed about these rather than consulted.
58. The handbook for parents and staff states that it is part of the school's philosophy that 'links with the community should be encouraged, maintained and strengthened'. The community has been supportive of the school. Several local businesses have given financially and cell phones were supplied for all members of staff by Digicel. Members of the community have been invited to come into school to share their expertise and have taken part in assemblies, cultural activities and extra-curricular events. Students have benefited from talks on road safety and the dangers of smoking, for example.
59. Students have been encouraged to do their part, and during the last year raised close to \$5000 for worthy causes – including the cancer society, Cayman Hospice and missionary work overseas.

## Provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum

60. Provision for literacy across the curriculum is good. Recognizing that many of their students have very low literacy skills, school leaders have made it a priority to address this problem. A reading specialist was recruited in 2006. Although she has not been given a specific job description, she sees her role as a supportive one. Her main focus has been on testing students in order to determine the priorities for each individual. She works mainly with students in the lower sets across the three year groups. In addition to this, she has provided teachers of all subjects with a very useful booklet of reading strategies, including subject specific graphic organizers, and has personalized the Teaching Handwriting Reading and Spelling Skills (THRASS) programme's charts for two subjects so far – social studies and science.
61. The staff have a good understanding of the literacy problems of the students and in nearly all lessons seen, teachers were making an effort to introduce students to 'key words' for that lesson or topic. Teachers have a checklist to help them to remember to use a variety of strategies to enhance literacy when planning their lessons.
62. These useful initiatives now need to be monitored more closely to ensure that there is consistent implementation by teachers of all subjects.
63. There is no whole school approach to helping to develop and apply students' numeracy skills in all subjects, but the provision is adequate overall. Students are being helped to apply numeracy skills in subjects such as science and social studies where they draw bar charts and line graphs and measure and calculate.
64. Teachers are making increasing use of ICT to enhance the teaching and learning. All rooms have access to ICT and seven have interactive white boards. The social studies department has led the way in modelling good practice in the use of ICT. Students were seen using computers in several subjects, particularly social studies, English and mathematics lessons as well as in ICT itself. There is some use by students of ICT to engage in independent research, but this is limited and could be extended, particularly in light of the government's plans for more project-based learning.